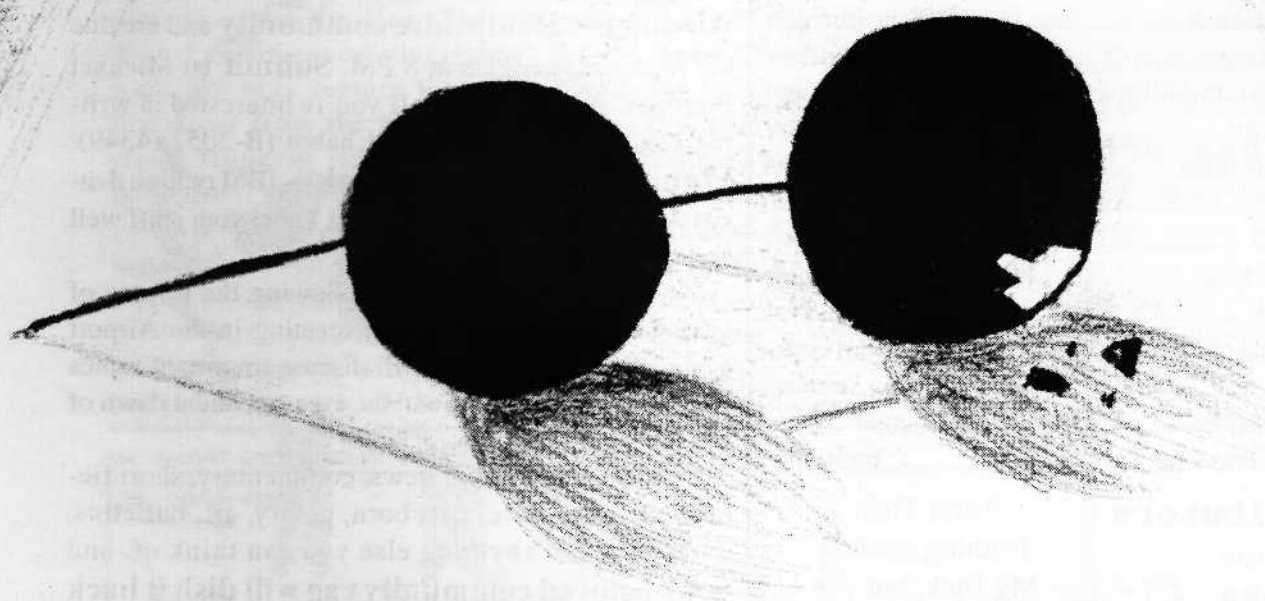


# The Omen



**SURLY BOY, 1997 - 2000**

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## The Omen

Volume 14, Number 7  
April 28, 2000

[hamp.hampshire.edu/~omen/old\\_archive](http://hamp.hampshire.edu/~omen/old_archive)

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"And Then  
Nothing Sucked  
My Dick, but you  
don't see me  
making an album  
about it."  
-Michael Zole

## Submit to us ...

**T**he *Omen* accepts submissions from any member of the Hampshire community.

### We won't edit anything you write

(unless it's for spelling or grammar), as

long as you're willing to **be responsible for what you say** (sign your real **NAME**). Libel, which we personally find amusing and entertaining for countless hours, is just not an option in this forum.

**Submissions can include anything involving the Hampshire community** and are due on Wednesday nights at 8 PM. **Submit to Michael Pierce (C-411, box 916)**. If you're interested in writing regularly, talk to Jacob Chabot (B-305, x4349). **We prefer submissions on disk** — IBM or high density Mac — but hard copy is okay. Label your stuff well and it will get back to you.

Also, every Tuesday following the release of an issue is the official *Omen* meeting in the Airport Lounge at 9:30 PM. We will discuss important topics like the upcoming issue and the ever-prevalent dawn of the Planet of the Apes.

So give us your news, commentary, short fiction, comics, satire, first born, poetry, art, bulletins, questions, and anything else you can think of, and **your beloved community rag will dish it back 700 times**. What better way to **be heard?**

*The Omen is a completely **nonpartisan** forum for expression. The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors' alone.*



## The Human Speaks!

An Editorial

by Jacob Chabot

I first came up with the concept for Surly Boy in the spring of 1997. *The Omen* was suffering a shortage of Jon Land's stick figures and put out a call for stick figure comics. Wade Stuckwisch and I started goofing off in Windows 3.11 paint and churned out a number of them. **While Wade's efforts, "Laurel and Hardy" and "Intermission" faded off into obscurity, a one panel strip entitled *The Amazing Adventures of Surly Boy*, struck a chord.** Back then his head was much bigger and his glasses much smaller. These John Lennon-esque sunglasses were the only feature that set him apart from the rest of the stick figures. He even had pointy, evil eyebrows back then. But his attitude was still the same. "Go to hell," were the first words he uttered. "Go to hell."

McCoy and the rest of his supporting cast arrived later and the simple strips turned into

grand adventures. Surly Boy was struck by lightning and became psychotically nice only to be defeated by George Clooney. He spent almost an entire year in prison, hanging around notable stars like Steve Buscemi. He went to Hell and back. He dealt with McCoy's murderous evil twin. He fell in love. I used to be able to dash off a strip in fifteen minutes without thinking. Now it takes me over an hour. I never thought doing a one joke strip involving stick figures would get so complex.

I first realized Surly Boy was going to die about two years ago. Sometimes these things just happen and I can't control them. It just popped into my head one day where and when he was going to die. Then, when it came time to pull the literary trigger, I hesitated. I didn't want to do it. People really liked this character. I really liked this character. Should I give him the happy ending that everybody wanted? That I wanted? I could do it...I could have him ride off into the sunset with Joey Karen and have all of the shitty times he's had been worth it. But, it just wasn't to be. I closed my eyes and pulled the trigger.

Is Surly Boy dead? Well,

he is and he isn't. He is dead and he's not coming back like Superman, if that's what you think. Despite all of the wacky things that have happened in Surly Boy's world, dead is dead. He's a mortal man like you or me. On the other hand, there are a lot of *Amazing Adventures* that I didn't get to fit in. Surly Boy goes on MTV's *The Real World*. Surly Boy teams up with man of adventure, Stick Jones when McCoy is kidnaped. The story of where McCoy came from and why Surly Boy lives with him. So, there are still tales to be told about Surly Boy. But he dies after being shot in a convenience store robbery sometime down the road.

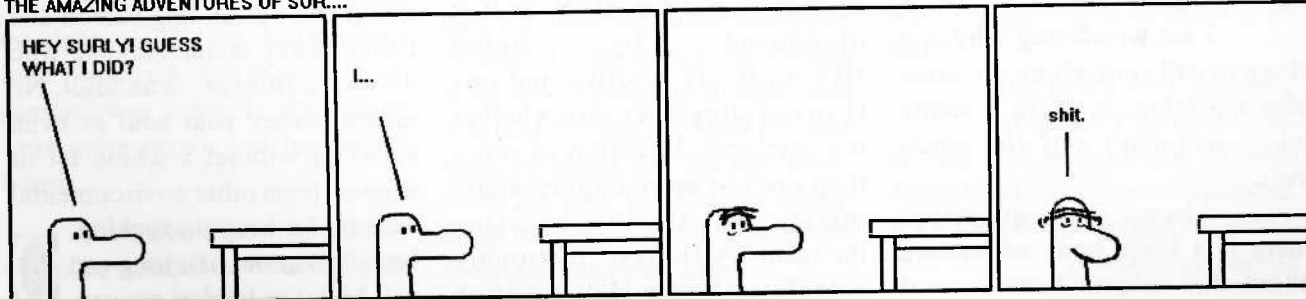
People always ask if Surly Boy is based on me. Some people assume that Surly Boy is based on them. There's a touch of truth in each of these statements. **There is a little Surly Boy in each and every one of us.** Yes, I'm sure deep inside every one of you, even the most upbeat people in the world, part of you just wants to give the world the finger and say, "Go to Hell."

Go to Hell.



THE AMAZING ADVENTURES OF SUR...

by Jacob Chabot



Visit the Surly Boy Archive at [www.members.tripod.com/xringcircus](http://www.members.tripod.com/xringcircus)

28 April, 2000 Page 3





# The Doctor is In... Sane!!

by Gareth Edel

**W**ell, more time has passed and *The Omen* calls. Today there are some interesting things I want to tell you before I get to my letters. The first announcement is that Mt. Holyoke college will be showing *Breakfast at Tiffany's* starring Audrey Hepburn on Friday and Saturday next week, and I for one will be there. The shows are at Gamble auditorium at 7 and 9 pm.

The event of the season, the Win a Date with Wade contest will be concluding next week and the results will appear in the next issue of this fine publication.

Third, I regret to say that my brother received no calls about dates after the last issue came out and at least one of you should have asked him. I am disappointed.

As always, letters can be addressed to my mail box 1419, my E-mail gaeF95@hampshire.edu, or placed under my door at Merrill B215. Now back to the letters.

Dear Evil Twin-

What are the societal and evolutionary benefits of polygamy vs. monogamy? Or monogamy vs. polygamy?

-Ani Difrancio

Dear "Ani",

I am wondering why you chose to call yourself by the name of a musician. Is there a subtle joke I just don't get? But whatever.

About your question, there is a large body of writing about this subject from several

disciplines, ranging from sociology and economics to anthropology and biology. The fact is, no one has ever figured out what the real benefits are of either system. The simple fact is half of the writing on this subject I have read is crap. A bunch of simple, trashy, and overly dramatic fantasizing, either by overeducated academics about how in a perfect world they would be expected to have more than one partner, or, on the other side, a crowd of prudish or excessively religious right wingers who don't want anyone to break from their morality.

The basic answer I would give you is that it has worked for some human cultures either way, and some cultures have failed at the one they tried. The same is true with animals; there are some who are highly successful and monogamous and some that are polygamous and happy that way. So unless you are trying to justify your own behavior, decide to take the middle ground.

Dear Evil Twin,

I was kind of concerned about the letter from the first year asking about the "AIDS test." It's important to tell people that it isn't an AIDS test--it's a test for antibodies to the HIV virus. There is no way to test for AIDS, as it is diagnosed by being HIV-antibody positive and one (I'm not altogether sure whether it's one opp. infection or more than one) or more opportunistic infections. Anyway, by using the term "AIDS test" it wrongly correlates being HIV positive

with a diagnosis of AIDS...this is just one of those things that bothers me whenever I hear it. Anyway, good luck finishing up your div III, obviously I'm procrastinating doing my revisions--but since this subject goes along with my div III, I guess I can pass it off as doing work? Sure, why not... One more thing--health services is NOT the place to go for tests, confidential is one thing but insurance companies have access to those files, and this can screw you over later. Tapesty in Northampton does them anonymously every Thursday afternoon, and this organization that works out of the urban league building in Springfield does them every day on a walk-in basis.

-concerned

Dear concerned,


Cool, thanks.

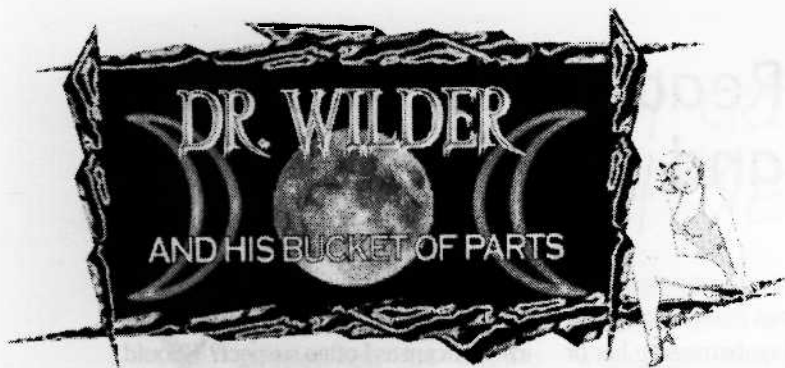
Dear Evil Twin,

**Do people who listen to heavy metal music dance with the devil?**

- Junior Jerry Falwell

Dear Jerry,

No, they don't; I am a moral and upstanding person and I love heavy metal. Anyone who disagrees from me is an idiot. No music shapes your soul or even behavior without a whole lot of support from other environmental factors. So keep on rocking, lets all wear our hair long and yell Metal as loud as we can. 



## Chapter Two: Atlantic City

by J. Wilder Konschak

**I**t was 1969 when Simon Socorro was born. It happened in Atlantic City, but he grew up in a house outside of it. Families like his family didn't live in the city. Simply no one lived in it at all. It seemed its people had gathered up quarters and dimes only days before every day, and had come down the expressway, sighing, "smell the ocean," as if it were a new thing. Some from Philadelphia. Some from New York. Some from Paris. They all came to Atlantic, and they all left Atlantic. Sure, some stayed and inhabited a space, or owned a building, but they didn't live in what the place really was. They lived in some house outside of it, too.

Atlantic City was about coming and going. Its people broke like the tides. The comings and goings of its people were as magical and dependable as the comings and goings of its waves. Though, while the ocean wore away at the coast, the people wore away at themselves.

In childhood, Simon went to the shore almost every day of spring. Unlike his parents, he thought it was better than in summer, because of the coolness, and because of the greenheads never coming out until the heat got worse. But then, when he was old enough to stay out late, he found the night was cool too, and the bugs were fewer still. And then, at night, summer was better, because there were more people pulsing on the boards.

When he'd grown tired of the waves, he watched the breaking of the

people, putting their trust in luck. They came to the city, to the boardwalk, to the casinos, and they gave their money, their hopes, to Fate. Some in great handfuls, some in little bits over a long time. They did it because they thought they'd get what they thought they deserved. They thought that Fate would pull them through, because it was their time, because it was their night to win, after losing for so long, it was meant to be.

There were the lucky ones coming from the casinos, sometimes. Simon didn't see them, he never noticed them, but they had the most peaceful looks. The lucky ones seemed to be coming, not going. They didn't make much noise. They went home by the Garden State Parkway, went home sighing, "smell the ocean," as if it were going to vanish tomorrow. **The lucky ones had broken even, and were so happy to have what they'd always had. The lucky ones never gambled again.**

But in general, when the people came, they had faces of all kinds: they were glad, or frightened, or confident, or solemn. And when they left, there were only two kinds. As regular as the seasons, as constant as the waves, people of all kinds went in to play, but only two kinds left: they were the happy, and the sad. Sometimes the poor were happy. Sometimes the rich were sad. Sometimes, it was the other way around.

But, no matter what, the next day they were gone. Left behind, the ocean kept beating against the coast, and the people kept beating against themselves. Life went on.

Once, a card dealer, a friend of the family, an employee of Trump Plaza most of his life, told Simon, "There's no God in games, son. It's as random as anything you can think of." As random as dust in the air. As random as grass on a hillside. "As random as lottery balls."

The dealer's name was Jim Lexington. He was Uncle Lex, and he was drunk in the Socorro family room, at Christmas. Simon was eleven.

"Well, you wouldn't think that, talking to the winners."

"Listen," he said to Simon's father. "The only ones more sappy than the winners is the losers."

"Um," Tom said.

"The winners are all about how God or Fate finally came through for 'em. How it was meant to be, how it was written in the stars. And the losers, they're all 'Why can't I ever win anything? Why am I always the loser? Where's my fucking prize? Ain't it my turn now?' Well, I ain't either of them ways – and Simon, don't you grow up to be that way either."

"Jim, please, it's Christmas."

"There ain't stars, or Gods, or Fate. You get what you get from dumb, blind luck. 'Cause it's just dice. It's ten decks, all shuffled up. It's 82-

*continued on page 12*

# Ramblings of the Ultra-Nerd

by Evan A. Baker

I like to think of myself at times as a transparent eyeball (because I'm pretentious and transcendental and all that nonsense). I don't like to think this because it's what I really want, but because I think it's the best option available to me. Ideally, I'd like to be known and loved by all, but the sad truth is that I'm just not very significant. I imagine that when I'm gone from this college, there aren't more than two people who'll remember I ever existed (and they're both going on leave). I am already just a ghost.

So I figure the best thing for me to be is an unnoticed observer. It's kinda fun to sit there and absorb everything around you, content with the thought that nobody really knows you're listening, so they don't care what you hear. **It could be a very powerful tool, invisibility. Claude Rains knew that** (everybody go rent the 1933 adaptation of *The Invisible Man* right this very second or I'll gut you all like fish!).

Then, every once in awhile, some little occurrence shatters this precious illusion. Is this a bad thing, though? Perhaps not...

It's happened a couple of times recently. An old friend I figured didn't know if I was dead or alive actually stayed up talking to me on Sunday, April 16<sup>th</sup>, and it was pretty cool. Then, two days later, something less significant caught me more off guard.

At 11:30 a.m. on Tuesday, April 18<sup>th</sup>, I entered the advising office to attend a meeting with Mary Frye. Sitting at the desk just inside the office was quite probably the prettiest girl at

this college (I refrain from mentioning her name to avoid embarrassing her or myself). Now, this girl is not somebody I actually know in any capacity, we have never spoken, nor have we had any reason to. I know her name only because I've listened carefully enough to other people's conversations to pick it up. The point is, there is absolutely no reason I can imagine that she should have any idea who I am. In fact, I would have bet everything in my wallet (some old receipts and my organ donor card) that if she saw me walking down the street she wouldn't have the slightest idea I went to the same school as her.

As I entered, a female voice said "Hey, Evan." I looked around. Who could have possibly said my name? Nobody I knew was in the office. Curious.

I told the girl at the desk I had an appointment. She asked "Did you get all my messages on your answering machine?"

My first thought: That's the same voice that said "Hey, Evan!" She knows my name! Curiouser and curiouser...

My second thought: Why would she have left a message – no, messages! – on my answering machine?

She had, apparently, called first to tell me that Mary was not in and the appointment would have to be re-scheduled, then again to inform me that Mary was in and the appointment would NOT have to be rescheduled. Okay, so the topic of the messages wasn't very interesting, who cares? She knew my name!

So there I was, suddenly faced with the shocking realization that I am, in fact, a human being, part of society, recognized by those around me. What to do with this information? Should I

delight in the fact that I am not as totally insignificant as I often suspect? Should I be crushed that I do not have the power of invisibility on my side? Should I write it off as a completely meaningless event, less than a foot-note in the history of my life?

Probably the third option makes the most sense. But, jeepers, I've been down in the dumps lately, so to the Devil with sense! Tonight, I rejoice, because a pretty girl knows my name!

## Other Ultra-Nerd notes:

Last issue, Christine Eslao asked the Grub Hut to indulge my soup at breakfast request so that I could leave Hampshire with one happy memory. Well, I've discussed the matter with Roberta, and she gave an acceptable explanation of why this need can not be met. If you really want me to leave Hampshire with a happy memory, well, I'm sure you could think of something that would make me smile; you're a talented girl (nudge, nudge, wink, wink).

Ultra-Nerd quote-of-the-issue: "Los Angeles is quite an intellectual town, and we were lucky enough to run into him down there." – Dave Guard of the original Kingston Trio

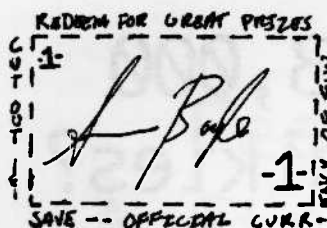
I finally got to see Peter Jackson's "Forgotten Silver" (which my devoted readers will recall I mentioned in an article before Spring break), and it was damned good. Go rent it. Now!

Winner of the Lord of the Rings pick-up-line contest: Erin Snyder, self-proclaimed "King of the Geeks." No prize has been awarded yet, but I'll think of something.

Okay, I guess that's all the nonsense I have for you this week. If you need me, I'll probably be out seeing American Psycho again and again and again. Great movie!







FILM CRITIC  
FOR HIRE

## Those Germans Know How to Build a Boat!

by Shaun Boyle

**Y**es, that's right, the little coupon on the banner above my article is the OFFICIAL currency of fun. Cut it out and save up for great prizes (to be announced later). I remember as a kid my brother and I always drank Kool-Aid so we could save the Kool-Aid points. They would have some pretty cool prizes and when they started offering Nintendo games, my brother and I almost died. We just couldn't comprehend that by drinking Kool-Aid we could get Gameboy games or even a Gameboy, **Gameboy being the greatest technological achievement of my childhood and maybe of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Yes, even greater than the cure for polio. My brother and I were just stupid.** My parents even offered to buy us each a Gameboy but we refused because we were on a mission. We set up Kool-Aid stands and sold PurplesaurusRex to the common folk of my neighborhood. If we had a little sibling, I'm sure we would have force-fed him Kool-Aid. Kool-Aid flowed through our veins and like most of the events of my life, our mission had a very anticlimactic ending. Come to think of it, the mission is technically not over because the Kool-Aid points are sitting in the attic in my family's house in Florida collecting dust. Well I could always mail them in and get my Gameboy. So I

got that going for me and of course I wouldn't share with my brother. I wasn't going to anyway, I just needed him to drink Kool-Aid for me. I love that gullible little bastard!

Time to review some films. I mean where else are you going to get hard hitting reviews of the latest releases? The Internet? Bah, the Internet, or what some have the deemed the 'information superhighway' is nothing more than a giant database for Britney Spears fan clubs. *The Forward*? Yeah right, I mean the 'misinformed' critic over at that 'fine periodical' uses 'complete' sentences and 'get' this: 'proper' punctuation. You're not going to find any of that 'shit' in *The Omen*. So lets gets to the reviewin'...

*American Psycho*: The film has been marketed as the 'most controversial movie of the year.' It stars Christian Bale as Patrick Bateman as a twenty-something Wall Street broker who likes to act out on his psychotic impulses. A girl in my Smith class, who happens to be the critic for *The Sophian*, summarized the film as a scary serial killer slasher flick that is 'so good and everyone must see it.' 'Good' is not what comes to mind when I think of *American Psycho*. It is a very uncomfortable movie to watch. Mary Harron, whom I contend is the best female filmmaker around right now, has done an adequate job with the material available. The novel *American Psycho* is essentially unfilmable. There basically is no plot, but that's also the point because Patrick Bateman is a hollow man. Instead of concentrating on the brutality of the novel, Harron's main focus is the character of Patrick

Bateman and on the wicked satire of materialism in the Eighties. The scenes where the characters compare business cards are priceless. The film, like the book, meanders from scene to scene and really has no true focus. I must say though it has the best usage of "Hip to be Square" by Huey Lewis and the News. I want to say the movie is a good adaptation of the book, but I can't. It's been almost two weeks since I saw it and I'm still mulling over it. It's a good companion piece to the book. I'll leave it at that.

*U-571*: "Holy Mary, mother of God," mutters Harvey Keitel's character as the U-Boat he is trapped in reaches a depth of 700 feet. The submarine levels out and there is an uncomfortable, anticipatory silence as the hull begins to bend under the intense water pressure. "Those Germans really know how to build a boat," exclaims Keitel as he breathes a sigh of relief. Another pause. Suddenly all fucking hell breaks loose. Pipes explode. Water begins to flood the engine compartment. A fire erupts in the communications room. Then a German destroyer on the surface begins dropping depth charges. *U-571* is perhaps the most clichéd war film of all time. We've seen all of this before. What makes *U-571* a passable action flick, however, is that it makes all those things feel fresh. It's a popcorn movie. You don't have to think about it. It's nice to watch a film where you don't have to worry about underlying symbolism or social ramifications. If I want to watch submariners mull over their existence, I'll rent *Das Boot*, but for now I'm happy with *U-571*.

Peace.



# COMMENTARY



## Still \$3,000 Walkie Talkies?

by Michelle Beach

I have been asked to write a correction to my article in the last issue of *The Omen*, "\$3,000 Walkie Talkies?" I was told that my figures regarding how much the walkie talkies cost were incorrect. So, after looking at the invoice and talking with Alan (the current Ficom Chair who is stuck dealing with this mess), here is accurate information, as near as I can figure.

To quickly recap what I wrote in the last issue: walkie talkies were rented during the "rape crisis" way back in November, by people associated with Community Council, but without any direct approval from that body (or from Ficom). The walkie talkies were used for about two weeks and have, since then, been sitting unused in the Community Council office. Last week, I wrote that these are going to cost nearly \$3000 in rental fees.

According to an outdated invoice, this figure is incorrect. The one and only invoice the company has sent regarding the rental, requests \$1400 in payment. The invoice is for 14 weeks of rental (from 11/18/99 to 2/25/00) at \$35 per radio (they rented four) per week.

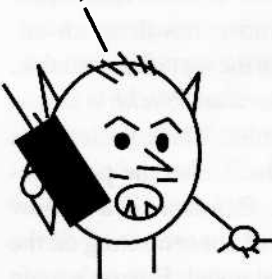
If you try to do the math, the invoice doesn't make sense ( $4 * 35 = 140$ ;  $140 * 14 = 1960$ ; this is a bit different from the \$1400 requested on the invoice). So, either there was something missing from the invoice (perhaps a discount of some sort, but those are usually written in) or there was a typo. IF the walkie talkies cost

\$25 per week, then it would be \$100 for four of the them per week and \$1400 for 14 weeks. This seems like a logical error, since the two and the three are near each other on keyboards. However, we have no way of knowing if this what happened.

Today, April 21, 2000, marks eight weeks since the date written on the invoice. So now, we have had the walkie talkies for a total of 22 weeks. **the additional weeks will bring the total to \$3080 in rental fees—which is what i reported in my last article** (if, in fact, they are \$35 each with no additional discounts, as the invoice indicates—if they are \$25 each, then it would only be \$2200 in fees).

Some have been discussing the option of buying the walkie talkies. To buy them, it will cost \$1600 in addition to the rental fees (which are still accumulating). Do we really need walkie talkies costing nearly \$6000?

hello, hello?



*The Article Goblins Use Walkie Talkies.*

WHAT!?



I hope these corrections clear things up.

These things now need to be paid for. The company really wants their money and something needs to be done soon. I still don't feel that the weeks that the walkie talkies sat in the Council office unused should be paid for from the Student Activities Fee. If a student group doesn't return a video on time, late fees cannot be paid for. I believe that this is very much the same thing.

Most likely a decision will be made regarding this issue after *The Omen* goes to press and before you read the article, which is unfortunate. Though, even if something is decided, decisions are rarely permanent.

Many people may be wondering how these will be paid for if the money doesn't come from the Student Activities Fee. Well, in the case of other late fees, the person(s) responsible pay for them out of pocket. With the bill as high as it is, this is probably not reasonable. So, perhaps a more creative solution could be found. Maybe a fundraiser could be held, or they could ask for donations. I don't care what they do as long as they don't use the Student Activities Fee to pay for the weeks that the walkie talkies went unused.

Want to voice your opinion on this issue? Come to the next Ficom meeting (Mondays at 7:30 in the Council office) or the next Council meeting (Tuesday at 3:30, probably in the FPH Faculty Lounge).





# Feed Me A Stray Cat



by Wade Stuckwisch

**S**o I actually saw some movies... *High Fidelity*, *American Psycho* and *Keeping The Faith*, to be specific. But first I have to say that the best thing I've seen all year is Matt Sears's Div III film, *Smart*. It's so fucking cool. I wish my Div III was that good. Not to say that all the Div III films I've seen this semester aren't good. In fact, you should go see all of them because some of us put a lot of time and money into them and if you don't we'll cry. Yeah. So back to the movies...

**High Fidelity:** Did I see this movie because John Cusak is in it? Not exactly. Did I see it for Joan Cusak? Not exactly. Did I see it because it was penned by the same writers who wrote *Grosse Pointe Blank*, or because it was directed by Stephen Frears? Not exactly. Or... did I see it because people kept telling me there was a character in the movie that was exactly like me? Well, that wasn't the reason either, but I was curious. And they were right. It's really eerie. I even kind of knew the Stiff Little Fingers reference he used to pick up Sarah Gilbert. I somehow feel like I am fated to move to Chicago and get a job at some indie record store now. Either that or somebody's been stealing my genetic material. Or Moby's. You can never be too sure. But the movie. It's good. It's funny, in a bleak sorta way.

The ending does sort of suck all the romance out of life, but there isn't necessarily anything wrong with that. A good date movie, but not for a first date... more like if you've been dating for a while.

**American Psycho:** Any movie that makes you hate rich people is good in my book. The rich yuppie scumbags in this movie are inspiration enough to make anyone want



"Wazzup Wade?" "I have a date tonight, courtesy of my Win A Date Contest!"

to take a nice sharp axe to someone. But in actuality this movie is mostly about food, in my opinion. I'm not sure exactly what food has to do with a yuppie serial killer with a flair for '80s pop, but it's there all the time so it must be important. Food and misanthropy. And running around naked with a chainsaw. A good date movie if you want your date clutching at your arm in fear (which is never really a bad thing) or if you're really turned on by death (which I suppose isn't necessarily a bad thing, although I would say it's a little weird...).

**Keeping The Faith:** What mystifies me are the pratfalls. This movie could have been just as good without all the silly physical humor. Not that the physical humor was bad, but... where was I? Oh yeah, I was waffling pointlessly. So a priest and a rabbi walk into a bar and comedy ensues. It's a classic plot really, except the rabbi doesn't walk into the bar with the priest, which I thought was a nice twist... where was I? Oh yeah, I was rambling incoherently. Sleep? What Div III? Supposedly Hampshire's own Stirling T. McLaughlin was an extra in this movie but I didn't see him. I blame idiot director Edward Norton for using such a narrow depth of field in the crowd shots. Way to go, Ted. It's funny, sweet, romantic and kinda sad all at the same

time so you'll probably like it. An excellent date movie, especially if you or your date is Jewish or Catholic or an Indian Sikh Hindu Muslim Irish Catholic pub owner.

Well, the "o" on my keyboard is dying slowly, so I suppose that's enough for one rambling shambles of a movie review. Don't worry, you'll only have to go through one more of these ever again, then I'll graduate. And then I'll be unemployed and then I'll die. Good times. See you on Skid Row with the other Hampshire alums.

# Astrology Is Not Just a River in Egypt

by Jacob Chabot and Evan A. Baker

**W**e all know *The Forward* isn't worth the paper it's printed on. It's sad because they try so hard. Their horoscopes are particularly noticeable in the area of "things that will make you cry because this is what humanity has come to." Not that they're wrong, mind you. They're just slightly off kilter. We here at *The Omen* got our crack team of psychics working to interpret what *The Forward* really meant by their horoscopes (seen in italics). If you don't like your horoscope, don't blame us, we're just the messenger!



**Aries (March 21-April 20):** *Your inner worries are all wrong. Go crazy this week. Watch an episode of Xena, Warrior Princess.*

You will go crazy this week, Aries. Unfortunately, you will not have a choice in the matter. It will start as a sneaking suspicion that everybody is out to get you. Then you'll start to see subtle things out of the corner of your eye, just little things like demons and dead people. Your insanity will become more apparent. The faces of people you talk to will morph into hideous monsters before your eyes. You will hear them say things like, "I WILL RIP YOUR SKIN OFF AND FUCK YOUR LIFELESS CORPSE," and "I WILL GRIND YOUR BONES TO MAKE MY BREAD." At this point you can't help yourself. You will quickly grab a sharp tool, like an axe, and hack everybody you see to fleshy pieces of gore. Momentarily, the haze will lift and you will realize what you have done. You killed everyone you love, you son of a bitch! Only one thing left to do, Aries. Turn the gun on yourself...



**Taurus (April 21-May 21):** *Let your hair get greasy, slap on some patchouli and go for a walk. Roam if you want to.*

Welcome to dirty hippy land, Taurus! It's a place filled with butterflies and rainbows! There is no need to bathe because you are at one with life itself. Smoke some pot or something. It's all good. Yeah...drum circles man. Crazy. Man. Too bad the rest of humanity doesn't take too kindly to freeloading, stinking, hippies. Your parents will kick you out because you refuse to get a job. You say that money is a construct of the Man and you want no part in the pursuit of it. Your parents' money was fine, though. You will stop at a friend's house for a quick toke before you head off to the loving arms of Mother Nature. Watch out when crossing the highway! Those large, fast moving objects are not your friends! Do not hug them! I repeat, **DO NOT HUG THEM FOR THEY ARE TRUCKS MOVING AT OVER 60MPH!**



**Gemini (May 22-June 21):** *Start considering starting your own business, like a dog-shaving business for the summer. They get hot too.*

Surprise, Gemini! You're a zoophile! Just the thought of running your fingers through a dog's mange and gracing the hard, hot body beneath sends shivers down your spine. Sexual shivers that is. Unfortunately, the dog only sees you as a piece of meat, and, well...you know dogs and meat!



**Cancer (June 22-July 22):** *Let your true colors shine tonight! Go out on the town. They love you.*

Put on the red light, you filthy whore! The corner of Hedgemonton and Arms is your lucky spot tonight! You will do good business, maybe even laying up to nine guys, three women, and a transsexual. Watch out for that one guy with the shifty eyes! He has AIDS! You dirty Whore!



**Leo (July 23-Aug 22):** *Relax this weekend, pamper yourself. Maybe go shopping for those spring must-have fashions. Have your hair done. Plan next year's drag ball outfit.*

Yep, drag ball is the only event you live for, Leo. The other 364 days of the year will be filled with a crushing, debilitating depression. What's the point to loving anybody. You'll only lose them eventually. It's only a matter of who dies first. Sigh. Just talking about you makes me depressed. Get out of my sight, Leo. Nobody likes you, you know.



**Virgo (Aug 23-Sept 23):** *Finish something that has been weighing on your mind. It will feel good to let it go. Try a new Martha Stewart recipe this month.*

You don't masturbate nearly enough. You know you want to. You've been staring longingly at your SAGA crush so much lately, you should probably "entertain" yourself at least three times a day! When you think you're out of steam, hop online and scope out those juicy "mature women" pics.

# Screw The Forward!



**Libra (Spt 24-Oct23):** Focus on improving your life this week. Get enough sleep. Go

visit the llamas and talk to them about your problems. That's what they're there for, listening.

Focus on removing your left ring finger this week. What do you need it for? A wedding ring!!? HAHAAHAHAHA! Oh man, do you ever wish! Who'd ever marry a loser like you?! Take a nap and your dreams will reveal the truth: that finger is the source of all your problems and a constant reminder that you'll never find true happiness. The llamas will be glad to bite that damnable appendage off for you. Don't worry. Their teeth are wicked hot, so they'll cauterize the wound. It's true. Go ahead and try it. Heh, heh.



**Scorpio (Oct 24-Nov 22):** Yes, those projects are on the right track. You've

done a lot this semester, don't deny yourself of that. Take a break tonight, then get up with the sun and go for a jog and then clean your room or mod. You'll feel better about the world.

The Forward was just trying to make you feel good by distracting you from what will really happen this week. They're jolly and good natured that way. Poor Scorpio. Poor, poor Scorpio. You

will have my pity when what is going to happen to you happens. It's terrible really. Well, on to Sagittarius!



**Sagittarius (Nov 23-Dec21):** Two words for you, Sagittarius: Frolic. Okay, only one.

Nevermind.

Two words, Sagittarius. Gay. Gay. That's right! You are the original G. G as in gay. All of the trouble in your life stems from the fact that you are denying your gayness and are foolishly having sex, or maybe I should say TRYING to have sex, with someone of the opposite sex. Remember when your pet died? It's because you are gay. Remember how you flunked algebra? It's 'cause you're gay. Remember how you borrowed the car without asking and crashed into a tree? Gay again. Remember how you were arrested for that murder that you "didn't commit?" Yup. Gay.



**Capricorn (Dec 22-Jan 20):** Get informed on the issues going on around the world.

Plan next weekend. Take some clothes to the dry cleaner. Watch a movie.

Just do some random shit today, Capricorn. None of it really matters anyway.



**Aquarius (Jan 21-Feb 19):** I know you were probably at Washing-

ton when this issue came out. Make sure to educate people that don't educate themselves. Email a long lost friend.

Your friends have all abandoned you. They hate you. The best revenge is to force yourself into every aspect of their lives. Haunt them. Torment them. Jerk off in their beds. A lot. The President has also abandoned you. Masturbate in his bed too. His bed is located in the White House, which is at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Wahington D.C. Go there. Then you can "educate" all your friends about what it's like to stain Presidential sheets. All of your friends will be interested and like you again. Hey, would I lie to you?



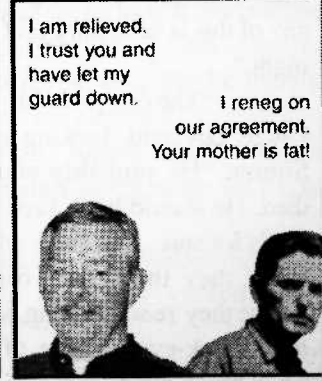
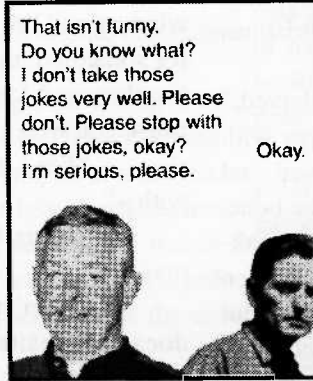
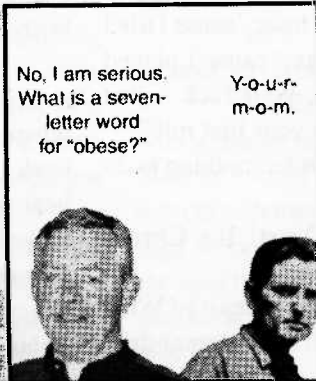
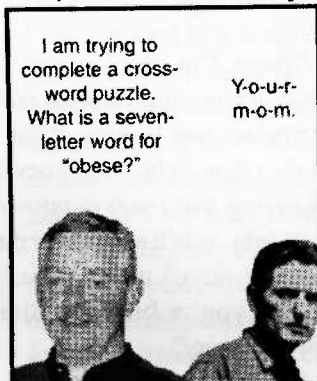
**Pisces (Feb 20-March 20):** Spring clean, both physically and spiritually. Air out your room,

wash your sheets and get that skeleton out of the closet.

Take all the corpses out of your closet, freezer, under your bed, and wherever else you've stored them. Take them to that apartment you rented in Hell's Kitchen. Dissolve them with lye. Remember, no man is an island, except you. All of your resentment is fully justified. Kill 'em all and let God sort 'em out.

Oh, Mumford! by B.T. Johnson

by Neil Golden





*continued from page 5*

card pick up." He swung his arms wide, sweeping the room. Simon could picture the cards falling like snowflakes. "It's nothin."

"Jim—"

"Maybe it's just too complicated for us to understand," Simon's mother interjected.

"And them that break even," Jim pushed on. "They're just as bad, boy. They're the real fools, really. They're the real jerks. They think they've been taught some lesson. They think they know not to throw their bone in the river."

What Lex meant was, there's a story of a little dog who had a bone. In the story, the little dog was crossing a bridge, and he looked over the edge. The water was over the edge. It was sunny, and in it, he saw a big dog with a much bigger bone. So he dropped his bone in the river, and tried to pick up the bigger one. But the bigger one was just a reflection, so it vanished, just the same as the little one did. Suddenly, there was just a big dog with a sad face, looking up at a little dog with a hard lesson.

"Did the dog blame Fate? Did he think his loss was the mysterious work of God, getting him ready for bigger and better bones?" Jim asked. "No. And maybe that dog was smarter than us, with our fancy toys for Christmas." He was looking at Simon's computer, in pieces beside its box.

"I can't see how this matters, Jim," Tom said flatly. "I can't see how any of this is necessary on Christmas night."

"The dog probably starved," Uncle Lex said, locking eyes with Simon. "He probably starved and died. He should have kept the bone, that's for sure. And folks who break-even, they think they break-even 'cause they're so, fucking, smart. But they break-even 'cause of nothing. They break-even 'cause of dice, and

shit. They crossed the bridge, but they didn't look in the water."

"We've heard this before Jim," Tom insisted, leaning back into the beige couch. He was drinking 7-UP. "The rant gets fancier every time, but it doesn't make any sense telling an eleven-year-old on Christmas night."

"Maybe he'll listen, 'cause you never do."

Simon didn't look up or say anything. He was fiddling with a new board game. It had numbers and patterns on it. It had colored dice, and Simon was turning them over and over in his hand, watching them as if they were curious insects crawling on his palm.

"Maybe the boy's smarter than you think he is, Tom."

"Enough."

**"Maybe he'll listen to me. He doesn't think I'm stupid. You sure don't listen to me. You think I'm an idiot."**

"No I don't."

"We certainly don't think you're an—"

"You do. You do. You don't agree with a word I say."

"No, we don't agree with you. But that doesn't mean we think you're an idiot. We just have different lives than you is all."

"Yeah. You sure do. You're winners, and I'm a loser, 'cause I tried for something more, 'cause I played the dice and lost. Well fuck — just cause you won on your first roll."

"Jim — this has nothing to do with —"

"Jesus Christ! It's Christmas!"

"I don't care when it is! What does that matter?" he demanded, cracking his drink down on the glass

table. Simon looked up again when the drink made its sound against the glass. He thought that Lex had broken the table. Simon was always afraid that he'd break the table himself. He hoped Lex had done it instead. "You know what — I say fuck you both!"

"Jim!" Simon's mother gasped.

"Have a Merry Christmas, with your happy family!"

With nothing more to say, Uncle Lex marched out of the living room, his shoulders and head down, out onto the gravel driveway. He sunk into his Corvette and drove away, crunching, much faster than the speed limit. It was a cold night, and there was rain on the road. It was a dangerous thing to do. He was very drunk.

But, he didn't die on Christmas, 1980. Jim Lexington lived from 1943 to 1997. He was born in August, and he died in September. He would ask to be cremated, and his ashes would be lost in beach sand, as he desired.

As the dice would have it, what he *did* do on Christmas, 1980, was paralyze himself against an overpass, somewhere around four in the morning.

He never regretted drinking and driving, and he never regretted storming out. What he regretted was having not died that night. He wished he'd been going faster when he hit the concrete, since life without legs didn't suit him. At least, that's what he told Simon, drunk again, on his own 54<sup>th</sup> birthday.

"Now, I'm very careful to say, Simon," he murmured at the end, when everyone was leaving, "that I *wish* I'd died that night. You'll never hear me saying that I was *supposed* to die that night. You'll never hear me saying that *anything's* meant to be."

"It's your birthday, Jim. Relax for a change."

"No, no, no," he said, shak-

ing his head vigorously. "You always used to listen to me. You listened right to me. How about you listen now."

"Don't be bitter, and preach, and I'll listen."

"But I *am* bitter. Of *course* I am. When I was your age, I thought I was a dealer. But I was just a player. And I hate gambling. I hate gambling so much. It's 'cause I've never been lucky. I've never been lucky a day in my life."

"Luck has nothing to do with it. People end up happy and sad, and I don't think it has anything to do with how much they win or lose."

"You don't think there are lucky ones? You think it all made fair sense."

"I'm just saying there are winners and losers. They all get what they earn. God doesn't play dice with the universe, and there's nothing else to it. There aren't even people that break-even. Those that break-even, they win or lose soon, too."

Jim looked up at Simon. "I guess I'm just a loser then, like I always said."

He blew on a party favor. It uncurled like a carpet, then curled again.

"If you stop thinking you're so unlucky, maybe you'd win."

"Cause there ain't any lucky ones," Jim smiled.

"No, there aren't any lucky ones."

"Well, I feel pretty full of *shit* luck, sitting in this fucking wheelchair."

Simon's parents tried to stop Uncle Lex the night he crushed his legs. They followed him to the door, telling him they hadn't meant he was a loser, telling him they hadn't thought they were winners, telling him that maybe it was all luck. They said maybe they were just lucky. But it was half-hearted.

They only talked about it once that night, and never again. From then on, his parents must have thought, there was nothing more to say about poor, rich Jim Lexington. All there was to wonder

was, "Why does he have to hate us, because we're happy?"

"He's a sore loser, Sam," Simon's father said, leaving the room, carrying some cookies. "Always has been"

"Oh - don't say that. You sound just like him," his mother scolded his father.

Then, she sighed, not listening for an answer from the other room. Her husband Tom rustled some papers there, and Samantha Rose Soccoro picked up a washcloth, to wipe some crumbs from the countertop into her palm. Simon was helping his mother clean up by putting plastic wrap on the cookies. He loved to help her.

"Mom?"

"Yes?"

"Can I ask you a question?"

"Yes."

"What does he mean we're winners?"

"Huh?"

"He has lots more money than us, doesn't he?"

"He's not talking about money, dear. He's talking about life," she answered.

He stopped wrapping the cookies. "What do you mean?"

"Uncle Lex is very lonely."

He finished tucking the plastic wrap beneath the Christmas Tree shaped plate, and handed it to his mother to put above the refrigerator. "Then why did he and Aunt Jan move apart?"

"Well, it's because your Uncle Lex thought he was settling for Aunt Jan."

"Um," Simon said, climbing up onto the counter.

"He thought he was in love with someone else. He thought his and Jan's love wasn't real, all of a sudden, even though they'd been together since high school, even though they met in the most beautiful way. Your Uncle just messed it up with some girl at the casino."

"Oh," Simon said.

"He was the dog that threw his bone into the water. That's why Aunt Jan is so sad."

"Oh."

"He wasn't really talking about money. Nothing's really about money."

"Oh."

"Do you know what I mean, Simon?"

He looked at the sink, full of pans with caked-on cookie dough. "Um, yes," he said.

**"When you have something that's meant to be, you don't throw it away. It's not just dice. A smart man said that God doesn't play dice with the universe. And He doesn't.** Just look at your father and me."

"Yeah."

"We had a wonderful Christmas, didn't we?"

"Yeah."

"So, do me a favor, dear," his mother said, turning to him, rubbing her damp hands in a red, white, and green towel. Simon scooted forward, to hop off the counter, but she stopped him with a hug. "Just do me a favor, and never be like your Uncle Lex."

"Um, okay."

"You promise?"

"I promise."

"Good," she said. She helped him down from the countertop. "Now, how about we go look at that computer of yours. Your dad's probably got it all hooked up by now. Maybe there's a game we can play on it."

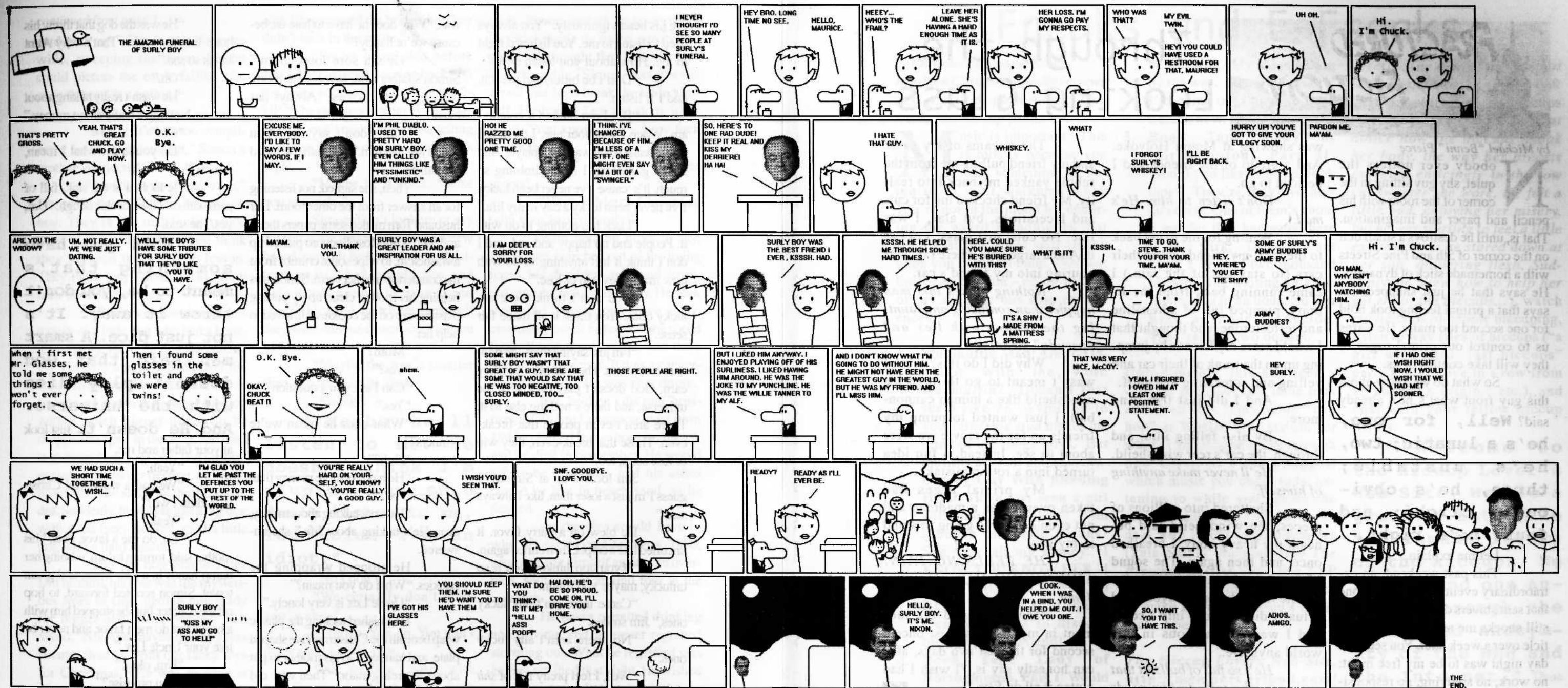
"Yeah," Simon said. "I like computer games much more than board games."

"Me too." She smiled distantly.

The computer worked beautifully.

And the same game was fun for almost seven years.





## Official Surly Boy Memorial Armband

by Jacob Chabot







# Through the Looking Glass

by Michael "Benni" Pierce

**N**obody ever notices the quiet, shy guy sitting in the corner of the room with his pencil and paper and imagination. That is, until he destroys a small deli on the corner of 5th and Pine Streets with a homemade stick of dynamite. He says that he just snapped. He says that a primal feeling took hold for one second too many. He warns us to control our primal urges or they will take control of us.

So what do we know about this guy from what's he's already said? **Well, for one, he's a lunatic; two, he's unstable; three, he's obviously cliché; and four, he's right.**

Let me explain.

This past weekend, an extraordinary event took place ... one that sent shivers down my spine and still shocks me as I re-read this article over a week later. You see, Friday night was to be my free night: no work, no studying, no responsibility. In other words, *Fight Club*

was showing at Mount Holyoke. And a group of my friends and I decided to go.

*Don't listen to him. He's mad.*

Waiting for me to get back to the cars, my friends sat in their cars (to stay out of the rain.) I came running back from the library, pumped full of adrenaline and testosterone, and thought that I would scare my friends by jumping up on the trunk of their car and yelling and screaming and stuff.

And I did just that. And more.

By also falling into, and through, the car's rear windshield.

*He'll never make anything of himself.*

Shattered into millions of pieces, the windshield laid beneath my heavy body. I breathed once, and then again. The sound of the glass shattering was so exquisite that I thought maybe I had actually died or gone into a coma and I wasn't conscious in this world anymore.

*He's so full of bullshit that everyone who talks to him needs a shovel to breathe.*

The screams of my name and my friend pulling me from the rubble yanked me back into reality. My friend checked me for cuts and lacerations, but alas, I was fine. No cuts, just glass. Lots of it. And a large hole where rain was pouring into my friend's car.

*Nothing makes this man happier than confusing and taunting the reader with lies and "pseudo" meaning.*

Why did I do this? Well, I wasn't meant to go through his windshield like a human cannonball. I just wanted to pump my friends up for the movie we were about to see. Instead, a fun idea turned into a rotten mistake.

My primal urges had taken over. I was a madman and not even a car was going to stand in my way.

*HE FEELS NO PAIN! AHHHHHHH! He's also very dumb.*

Having relived the moment in my mind at least once a second for the last two days, all I can honestly say is, "I wish I had gotten it all on film."

Isn't that the truth. (sigh)



Oh, Mumford! by B.T. Johnson

by Neil Golden



"Mom, can we have peanut-butter sandwiches for dinner?"



"Gramma, I want to learn to play the harp so when I go to heaven they'll pick me first for angel duty."



"All Daddy said was 'Because aging white Christians are a safe and lucrative target demographic.'"



"Dolly and I went to the creek looking for turtles, but all we found was mud!"

# Freaks and E-Freaks

by Christine Fernsebner Eslao  
In which Christine usually reviews  
new music & porn sites. This  
week, just hiccup porn.

**M**usic is important. This is mostly because you need something to listen to in your walkman when you're not in the mood for enduring the weird monologues that people at bus stops will inflict upon you if you let them. Not that those can't be fun – below is a list of my top five bus stop experiences.

1. **Studmuffin Man:** Are you familiar with the word *studmuffin*? Doesn't that seem like an oxymoron to you? Because *stud* makes me think of big tough guys. But muffins are soft and squishy.
2. **Creepy Guy With Bleeding Head:** Have you seen a girl with short blonde hair? With a bunch of Puerto Ricans? She stole all my money. I KNOW YOU KNOW HER. I SAW YOU TALKING TO HER. I have a head injury. [removes hood to display bleeding head wound]
3. **Book Tape Lady of Northampton, Part I:** Would you like to buy a book tape?
4. **Dan the Millionaire:** Do you like this mirror? [displays recently-purchased floor-length mirror] I was installing a sink in my ex-wife's bathroom and I accidentally broke her mirror. Are you familiar with Ecclesiastes? It's the book in the Bible that says nothing in this world is important. Especially not mirrors. Would you like to have dinner with me? That's okay, you should

be studying. My name's Dan, by the way. I'm a millionaire. I'm going over there to have a steak now.

5. **Book Tape Lady of Northampton, Part II:** Would you like to buy a book tape? They're only two dollars each. One of them's about a murder that happened here in this park. Do you want one? I've sold two thousand of them. I'm waiting for a bus that comes in an hour. So you have an hour to decide. They're only two dollars.

Unfortunately, this has been a week of unremarkable indie rock and even less remarkable "trip hop" at WMHC (the station for which I am obliged to sift through new CDs), so I can't suggest which music you ought to be listening to while you ignore the crazy people. And I'm too lazy to deal with recent vinyl purchases (Pale Saints' *Barging Into The Presence Of God*, and a live 2-LP Joan of Arc album). But I intend to make up for last issue's tragic lack of porn.

*The Hiccup Lovers Web Site*, <http://members.tripod.com/HiccupLovers/index.html>

This site, which lacks the usual nude jpegs and membership fees, is very specialized porn for very special people, and it's a lot more interesting than your typical porn site. There's plenty to do here: take the survey (*How old were you when you first discovered your attraction to the hiccups? Is your love for hiccups an important part of your sex life and fantasies, or is it optional? Could you please*

*describe the type of hiccup that you like the most?*), read real & fictional stories about hiccups (*Of course, he couldn't help but notice how the hiccups shook her body, the way her breasts quivered enticingly in the low cut sweater she wore. He felt a little bad, enjoying her misery, but he was starting to feel a little excitement as he stared down at her soft, quivering flesh. Suddenly, he knew how to help her get rid of the hiccups...*), watch movie clips of people hiccuping, listen to wav files of hiccups ("a girl with hard, fast hiccups" parts 1 & 2, "five in a row from an unknown origin," etc.), and chat with your fellow hiccup lovers.

**"Welcome to the Hiccup Lover's Web Site. We are a group of both male and female lovers of the hiccups. We have found one another through the power and anonymity of the WWW and the Internet."** Thus begins the introduction to the Hiccup Lovers Web site. I cannot help but recall a favorite Momus interview from 1994: "What effect (if any) do you want your music to have on people?" "I'd just like them to feel a bit more okay about themselves, maybe help them explore their hangups so they can move on to bigger, more bizarre hangups." Six years later, we no longer need Momus records for that; now we have the web.



# One Last Kick For A Dead Horse

by Wade Stuckwisch

Writing for the *Omen* for something like three years has taught me, I think, quite a bit about how people function or don't function as individuals in a community. But first, a long digression. I remember, somewhere in my early, impressionable years at Camp Hamp, running into the idea of "dialectic conflict." It's one of those terms you encounter and try to use in academic papers for semesters and semesters without ever really understanding it. It's sort of like a less annoying "post-modernism" or an easier-to-understand "Freudian psychology." From what I've been able to piece together over four years, "dialectic conflict" in general is the process of formulating an argument based on a thesis and a conflicting antithesis. For Hegel, dialectic conflict was seen as the process by which divine truth could eventually be discovered (known as Hegelian dialectic). The Marxists attempted to de-mystify Hegel's construction dialectic by formulating the idea of "materialist dialectic." This philosophy worked conveniently well with other Marxist ideologies like class war. In general, the basic ideal of dialectic conflict is that, by the conflict produced, some greater truth could be discovered through a synthesis of the two arguments. For Hegel it was the absolute knowledge of the divine; for the Marxists it was an earthly socialist utopia. I've always been fascinated by the philosophy of dialectic conflict, maybe just 'cause I'm such an argumentative sonofabitch. But in my view, there are two major assumptions involved in the way the philosophy of dialectic conflict has developed. One is that there is an absolute truth; some sort of light at the end of the tunnel. Scary thought, that there might be no absolute truth or ideal or meaning or justice in the world, huh? I think maybe some of the Existentialists mulled over the idea but I don't think

any of them ever really came to grips with it. Camus was close, but to paraphrase Charles Bukowski, you get the feeling it never affected him. The other shortsight to me seems to be the idea that human beings will ever have the wisdom or mental capacity to form any sort of decent thesis, or even recognize the antithesis, much less ever reach any sort of divine synthesis.

This said, I'd like to address the whole *Omen* poster debate one last time.

**The whole debate was quite a firm reminder just what an stupid ignorant tribe of simians the human race really is, despite how smart we like to think we are.**

Throughout the entire debate I can think of a grand total of one person on either side of the issue who seemed to have anything fresh and intelligent to say about the whole situation. Instead, what the whole controversy seemed to generate was a lot of buzzwords and name-calling from both sides of the aisle. I think the only result of the whole debacle was helping Hampshire students decide who their enemies were and putting names to faces. The beauty of *The Omen* is that it does create controversy. Check a few back issues—we've been doing it for years. The *Omen* at its best forces people to think by poking them where it hurts, or at least I would like to think that it does. The whole debate over the *Omen* poster, though, really shook my faith in the ability of conflict to spawn its own resolution.

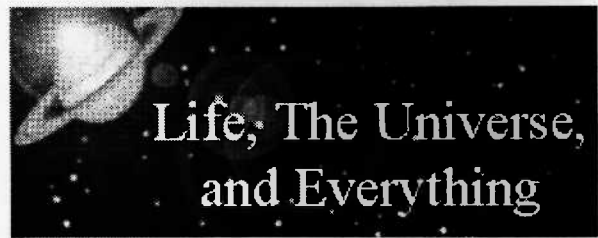
One argument I remember hearing over and over again amid the wash of cute academic phrases stolen from last semester's SS class was the idea that the opinions of the historically repressed (women, ethnic minorities, etc.)

are silenced by some form of privileged voice perceived to belong to the non-oppressed (as if no white person or male has ever experienced any form of oppression in their lives). I don't argue with that point at all; in fact I agree with it wholeheartedly. Unfortunately, the insidious voice of silence works both ways. Over and over again I hear people's opinions discounted as "racist" or "sexist" or "misogynist" without a second thought. The moment any of these labels is applied to an idea or, worse yet, an individual in order to demonize and devalue it or him or her, the effect silences and oppresses just as effectively as any white or male privilege. Over and over again it seemed that people with opinions in any sort of disagreement with the dominant liberal Hampshire discourse were treated as ignorant, or even insane or retarded. If you wonder why so many people seem so insensitive about issues of race and gender on this campus (and, by the way, I think there's no excuse for the level of insensitivity I've seen), maybe it's because you never listened to their side before you decided that you possess the knowledge of the divine and they're just ignorant or stupid... after all, why be compassionate when no one listens? I can't think of a more dangerous atmosphere for an institution supposedly dedicated to free thought. Silence is a two-way street and people really need to acknowledge this if anyone ever expects to reach any sort of greater wisdom from this kind of debate. And if anyone tries to say I'm a misogynist because I quoted Charles Bukowski earlier, or that I'm fetishizing black culture because I can recite large portions of "Shaft" from memory, or that I'm a dangerously demented sex fiend just because, god and/or goddess forbid, I made that goddamn poster, well, you're welcome to your opinion but I cordially invite you to jam it up your ass if you refuse to even try to see my side.

*continued on next page*



# Hey Kids! What Time Is It?



by Jennifer Jymm Gifford

**T**ravis Dale is my new nemesis. My mission in life is to thwart all of his evil plans and eventually to inflict a slow and painful death upon his frail body. But that's not what I want to write about this week. I want to write about Naked Time.

This weekend, I have experienced for the first time that hell they call the Mod Interview. While I am in full support of the wonderful social atmosphere that can be found in the dorms, the band that practices constantly on my hall, and the recurring illness resulting from consumption of SAGA food has forced me to seriously consider other living situations. Unfortunately, every person that I am acquainted with that has his or her own mod can only offer me a double to live in. And this is just not an option, for one simple reason. Naked Time.

Naked Time is that precious moment in the day when you know that it is time to remove all of your clothing and do whatever it is that you do when you are naked. Some people like to dance around. Some people like to do Yoga. Some people like to lie in the sun. I like to do all of the above. It's just, when I find myself without my clothing, I realize how wonderful it feels. Then I have a problem convincing myself that it would be worth it to put my clothes back

on. And I know that I couldn't force a roommate to endure my Naked Time, no matter how much I hated her.

There is much to be said for this wonderful phenomenon I call Naked Time. Naked Time brings a person back to the basics, reminds us all where we come from. When we are born, we are naked. We're not wearing the latest from Gap, or the Thrift Store Special. There are no outer markings to let people know who you are. When you get naked, you are shedding the labels that clothing can attach to you.

Naked Time also gives you a reason not to talk to people. If someone knocks on the door and you're naked, you're certainly not going to answer the door until you've put some clothes on. Thus, Naked Time can help support your anti-social behaviours. If you don't feel like gettin' dressed, you just let 'em knock. Later you tell them that you were having Naked Time. That lovely person will surely understand. **I don't know of a single person who doesn't understand the wonders of Naked Time.**

The thing is, I am so sexy, I just can't help but love myself when I am naked. I begin to feel sorry for all of the people that can't see me at that mo-

ment. Sometimes, when it's Naked Time, I'll leave my curtain open, just in the off chance that someone might like to share in Naked Time with me. I like to look at myself in the mirror and think, damn I'm sexy. What fun is that when I'm dressed? None at all.

Perhaps, you say, an agreement could be worked out with your roommate. Jymm, you say, you could just schedule Naked Time. But Naked Time cannot be confined to our temporal realities. Naked Time comes and goes as it will, and will not be denied. When Naked Time calls, I must answer!!! Sometimes, I go naked under my clothes, just to extend that wonderful naked feeling for as long as possible.

And, because I am a Hampshire student, and I believe that everyone should ascribe to the same ideals I do, I think that Naked Time should be instituted as a campuswide policy. In fact, I think that all of the housing on campus should be made clothing optional, with exceptions made only for certain halls (it would be like requesting to live on a single sex hall). Everyone could participate in Naked Time, and throw off the chains of the society that tells us to wear clothing. Hooray for Naked Time.

That's all. Death to Travis Dale. Goodnight.

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In the end, I'd just like to say that my favorite thing about Hampshire has been the true freaks, the people who will probably never be truly understood by anyone, who will always be loved by a few and despised by many. I didn't like all of them but Hampshire would be a shithole of an intellectual and creative quagmire without them. Sure, some-

times they're way off-base or even dead wrong about shit, but at least they brought a fresh perspective, maybe even inspired you to try to see their warped point of view. Enough of this boring liberal neo-fascist hippie communal bullshit. Hampshire is not a commune, and it never fucking should be. With this many brilliant freaks around, Hampshire should be a

warzone. If somebody isn't uncomfortable then something's wrong. And my one regret about that fucking poster is, when one guy stood up at an all community meeting and shook my hand for being part of *The Omen*, that I didn't give him a firmer handshake. Dialectic conflict, baby. To quote Bukowski again, I prefer somebody who screams while they burn.

Toast,  
dammit!  
TOAST!



# I Write My Articles the Day of Layout

by Gabriel Mckee

**S**ome recent changes on campus and in academia in general:

- After years of paradigm-shifting, post-modern theorists are changing their tune. Instead of claiming that "there are multiple interpretations of every text," the new post-modern creed shall be "there are multiple interpretations of every text, except for the ones I don't like. Those just have one interpretation, and it ain't yours." This change eliminates the pesky problem of having to "agree to disagree." Now when someone says something you don't like, you can silence them however you please, just like you've always wanted to.
- In response to the Red Flag's recent request that Hampshire not invest in or accept donations from organizations or individuals who are not in line with the college's values (which are laid out on pages 975-1083 of Non Satis Non Scire), the Admissions office is scrapping its traditional procedure of student selection. Now, Admissions will conduct a rigorous political screening

on all applicants, making certain that they agree with every point in the Hampshire Values List. "After all," says Jean-Pierre Sodexho, Admissions' Minister of Propaganda, "We don't want our integrity spoiled by the filthy blood-money of those capitalist pigs who would dare to pay their children's tuition." A Community Council representative, who wishes to remain anonymous, was asked if he feels that a lack of political diversity is contrary to Hampshire's aforementioned values. He replied, **"Burn in hell bastards! We will all be better off without your corrupting, moderate influence."**

- To further apply the school's new policy of tuition-acceptance responsibility, Community Council is adopting several new functions and its official name is being changed to the "Political Re-education Council," or "PoRC." "It's not enough to simply screen out deviants when they apply," said the still-anonymous Council representative.

"We need to periodically check up on every member of the community. Our integrity is everything, and if we allow students who offend Hampshire's values (outlined on pages 1000-2375 of the Forward's charter) to remain on our campus, it will be soiled forever. And my first initial is D."

- The Board of Trustees voted unanimously to transfer its power to the Red Flag, which is far more experienced in running colleges. No coercion was involved. Former board member and president, now "Official Source of All Evil" Greg Prince, says, "After reading the Red Flag's last article, we realized that they could do a much better job than we. And a sniper does *not* have his sights trained on me as I say this." The Red Flag, the members of which are remaining in a state of semi-anonymity, says it plans to begin its reign by holding a rally on the library lawn, which will involve lots of big red banners and a bonfire. Attendance is mandatory.

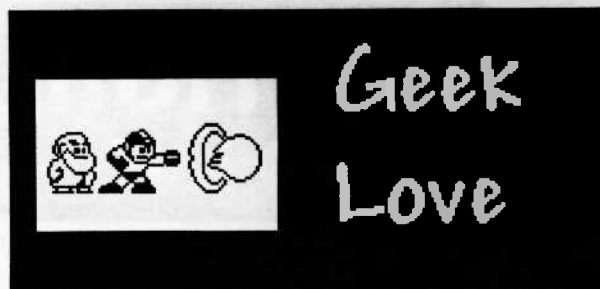
I have been asked to specify that this article was not written under duress.



## Rose is Rose By Pat Brady and Gabriel Mckee



# Not Quite That Old Time Religion



by Karl Moore

I always thought one of the purposes of the Omen was to expose people to works and ideas they haven't been exposed to before, or some other such nonsense. So I feel sort of cheap writing about something that's already been covered in *Spin*, for

goshsakes... But I just couldn't resist babbling about DC Comics' nearly-complete series *Preacher*. A comment made by an acquaintance while flipping through some issues went something like this: "ugh... violence, so much.... why so much... ugh..." I'll admit, *Preacher* is the most fucked-up comic I've read in a long while; never before have I seen

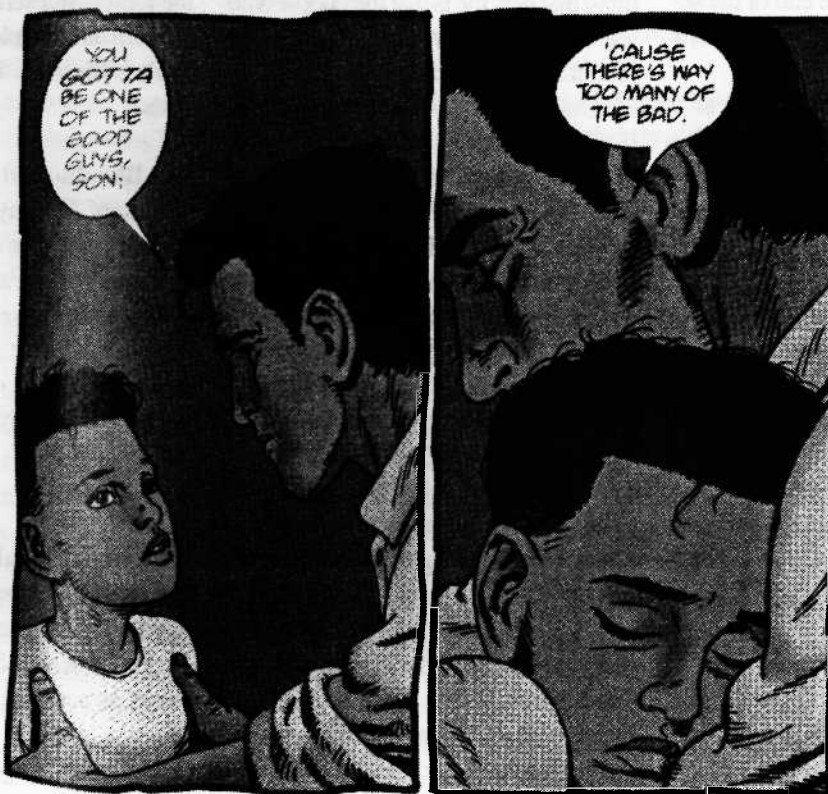
someone make good on the threat "I'll rip off your head and shit down your neck" in a comic. But it's also one helluva tale...

In a hundred words or less: small-town Texas preacher Jesse Custer gets imbued with Genesis, the offspring of a devil and an angel. Extremely powerful, Genesis gives Jesse the Word

of God, the ability to command humans and possibly even God himself. Needless to say this doesn't sit well with God, who abandons His place in heaven without so much as a goodbye. Determined to find God and get an explanation for His desertion, Jesse sets out in search of the Al-

lent job of approximating the Southern dialect. And however graphic *Preacher* gets, it never, ever gets stupid. Like many "adult" comics, *Preacher* is gory, explicit, and over the top, but it also deals with truly adult themes: love, religion, purpose, duty and learning to deal with your past.

The artwork, by Steve Dillon, won't impress anyone, but it gets the job done, with some especially nice faces. Glenn Fabry's covers are another matter entirely- by whatever standard you measure art, you have to agree Mr. Fabry is the shit. You can get a good look at Mr. Fabry's artwork at <http://www.maloca.com/preacher.htm> or <http://jladesigns.com/preacher/>.



In *Between the head-crackin'*, *Preacher* dishes out some drama.

mighty. Along the way, he runs into a vast assortment of unsavory types and even a few allies.

Ok, so it's not *Crime and Punishment*. It is, however, a damn good read. Jesse is as Texan as they come- at times almost unbelievably so- but that's forgivable. Considering writer Garth Ennis is Irish, he does an excel-

So if you're in the mood for graphic violence, sex, and a nifty yarn, don't hesitate to pick up a few issues of *Preacher* and see if it's somethin' y'all could take a likin' to.

Stay sexy, Hampshire. Don't put up with scum.





## I Came To Get Down, I Came To Get Down

by Michael Zole

College has made me lose all concept of time. It was on the way out before I got here, but at this point, I need a watch just to tell what day of the week it is. And without my Sailor Moon calendar (what, you think I'm kidding?) I'd be totally oblivious to the passage of months. So I was a bit startled the other day when I looked at the calendar and counted the weeks till the end of the semester. Yep! Not many! That explains all those final projects!

Since this is the year's penultimate *Omen*, I thought I'd revisit some of the topics I've covered over the year, some that other *Omen* writers have covered, some that none of us have covered, and some other things that piss me off (guess which is which). No need to thank me; it's a labor of love. Okay, here we go:

**All Community Meetings:** I don't go to them. They angry up the blood. Besides, it's not like anyone says anything important there, and **in a few weeks the Community will get distracted, like a cat with a ball of yarn, and the meeting will be lost in the mists of time.** Remember the one about financial aid? See, neither do I. By the way, what's a "teach-in?"

**The Red Flag:** If they hate Hampshire's administration so much, why don't they leave? Or is complaining about Greg Prince just practice for complaining about President What's-His-Name? Or

maybe "A \$10,000 Bible?" is just code for "ORGY IN THE RED BARN FRIDAY!"

**Prescott Fire:** In real life, destruction of peoples' property isn't funny. That's why we have Jackie Chan movies. That dude can really destroy stuff. Remember the end of *Mr. Nice Guy*?

**Sexism and Racism on Campus:** The thing that gets me is that the people who were offended by the Omen poster (about 20% of the campus, according to the Daily Jolt poll) seemed to think that if you weren't offended by the poster, you were aroused by it (the only question was, were you proud or ashamed of your arousal?). The other thing that gets me is the endless prattling on about sexism, racism, heterosexism, et cetera. Only one thing needs to be said, people: if it ends in an "-ism", it's not doing anybody any good. Remember: Stalin was extremely left-wing, and Hitler was extremely right-wing, but they both ended up killing millions of people. This campus is living proof that moderation is the way to go.

**WTO Protests:** My parents went to Washington, D.C. and got stuck in what my dad described as "WTO protests" (with the quotes), adding: "pretty wimpy, but we saw some of those 'anarchist' guys in black bandanas." Protesting is fun, isn't it? Just remember, Thoreau advocated "civil disobedience", not "making an ass of yourself".

**Win a Date With Wade:** I don't care what anyone says, that was a sexy photo of Wade. Damn this heterosexuality!

**Three Kings:** When I saw George

Clooney in this movie, the first thought to cross my mind was "Hey! That's the doctor from Surly Boy!" Honest to God.

**Surly Boy:** I think that Surly Boy should have met his end by attaining ultimate happiness, and then exploding—because a happy Surly Boy, folks, is irony defined. But I guess that's why Jacob is drawing the comics while I'm here writing this stinkin' article. While we're on the topic—if a school of 1100 students can turn out a comic like Surly Boy, why can't UMass do better than Kampus Kids?

**The Bloodhound Gang:** I stand by my review of *Hooray For Boobies*, but I want to make one thing clear. Their first single from that album is called "The Bad Touch". It is *not* called "Do It Like They Do On The Discovery Channel", contrary to what everyone on Napster seems to think. (By the way, the bit about the locusts didn't mean anything. Go back to sleep.)

**Eminem:** Speaking of white rap, Eminem uses samples from Soul Calibur, a Dreamcast game, in his latest single "The Real Slim Shady". In other news, he's still an asshole.

**The Tao of Eazy-E:** I wish to stress that there is nothing funny about Eazy-E's 1995 death by AIDS. However, the same cannot be said for the lyrics to "Nutz On Ya Chin". "Don't ask Eazy shit; it's still a hit is a hit, and a bitch is a bitch." Word.

**The Simpsons:** The new episodes, while hilarious, are still leaving me with that empty feeling. I stick by my

*continued on next page*

# Attention Assholes!



by Devan Goldstein

**T**o whom it may concern:

How did you ever get so lazy and confused and irresponsible?

Was it poor parenting? Do you suffer from Only-Child Syndrome? Don't expect any sympathy. Only you are responsible for being a fuck-up. Is Daddy's blood so rich that he, like you, believes that he deserves special treatment?

You are both mistaken. I don't know your father, but I know you. And until you grow the fuck up, you deserve only the worst in life.

Let me return to my main point of concern. **Do you think that someone should clean up after you just because you are too bored to throw away your cups and butts and bottles?** Or are you just so stupid and ridiculous that you don't care that your campus looks like your room at home? You are ugly in the worst way. Why don't you walk thirty feet to a garbage can, and throw away the waste products of your spoiled life?

And perhaps I need not mention how stupid you are for smoking in the first place. I bet it really helped your image in 8th grade, didn't it? Good for you, shitmouth.

And maybe you are responsible, too, for the pointless destruction of property that occurs so frequently. Asshole. What do you think you are proving? That you are an asshole? We knew that already—Thanks all the same. Sober up for once in your life and stop making other people pay for your unbearably childish acts of rebellion, if it even deserves such a title. Or maybe you were not drunk. Then you don't even have a bad excuse for your actions. Why do you bother living?

Do you think that throwing a chair off a roof makes you a man? I can't fucking wait to see what your children will be like. Wait—I already see it: They will be just like you.

Quit fingering your own asshole for just a minute, and think about the fact that your hands are stained with shit.

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previous article: If you haven't been watching Futurama, you're missing out. The episode where Bender was a pimp was precious.

**Sega Dreamcast:** I've had a lot of fun with my Dreamcast, and I'd noticed that a lot of people were ignoring it in lieu of the upcoming PlayStation 2, which is a shame, so I thought I'd point out some of the Dreamcast's virtues. I ended up introducing a debate of Beatles/Stones proportions. Sorry about that!

**Video games:** But, dude, I hardly even get a chance to play them anymore. Computer games are a different matter, though, because you can always pretend that you're just taking a break from your actual work.

**Isaac Curtis:** What a fun guy. I wonder if he does weddings.

**The Omen Staff:** During the whole poster uproar, the entire Omen staff was accused of being no less than evil. Well, I've spent plenty of time with the Omen staff. Over the year we've exchanged tales, bonded through adversity, laughed, cried, made mix tapes, and proofread your submissions, and I can tell you this: the Omen staff are kings among men (although I think some of them are women), and it's time we all gave them props. Jacob Chabot, Wade Stuckwisch, and Mark Hugo are three stand-up gents, and this campus really won't be the same without their biting commentary and years of experience in the field of being sick of Hampshire. Michelle Beach was always there to provide

a serious, well thought-out article; Wilder was just the man to provide the antidote to Michelle's sanity; Jess VanScoy kept our walls safe from Forward-induced blandness; and Keely... well, we love Keely. And let's not forget Michael "Benni" Pierce, easily the hardest-working man on this campus: he's a major player in not only the Omen but also the WWC, Darwin's Kids, the library, the admissions office, PVTA, and that stairwell in Cole that causes my glasses to fog up. The Omen staff were also very supportive of me and the other rookie staffers. In short, if you think these folks are evil because of the poster, I have to doubt your ability to combat racism or sexism — you can't even overcome your own prejudice.

Peace out everybody, or whatever the kids are saying these days.

# The Stigma of Being a Victim

by Susan McWilliams, Editor-in-Chief of *The Amherst Student*. Contributed by Anna Elbers.

*Contributor's Note: I am asking The Omen to reprint this article because I think too many people are unaware or choose to ignore many of the common reactions to sexual assault and harassment. This article was not written by a Hampshire student and it mentions fratboys, but it is applicable to life at Hampshire. Situations like the one described in this article occur at Hampshire, and too often everyone except the perpetrator is blamed and held accountable.*

Ever since it happened, I've wanted to write about it but couldn't find the proper words. "It" was that we had sex. And I didn't want to.

Initially, I was caught up in the circumstance of it all: that we were both drunk, that he was my boyfriend's fraternity brother, that the guy in question (from here on named, not too thrillingly, "X") and I had been good friends, that I didn't object as much as I could. I took this all to mean that somewhere, "X" had an out, and I was as much to blame as he.

I had titled the piece, "A Fine Line Between Rape and Regret." I came out waving the banner of the latter, thinking that rape implied something more coercive, more dramatic, more evil than my own experience. Something, in short, that couldn't have happened to me. I wasn't too traumatized; I didn't have too many scars; I hadn't screamed too loudly; I knew that I could carry on with my life.

In that essay, I argued that calling "rape" is the easy way out because it automatically shifts responsibility. Calling yourself a "victim," I thought, was something that anyone could do, that it was much more difficult to accept your own culpability in the doing of a wrong.

But I was completely incorrect. Since then, I've come to realize that it's the most difficult thing in the world to admit being a victim. The very acknowledgment concedes a kind of weakness, whether it be of physical strength or emo-

tional resolve, that no one wants to have. I certainly don't. I had trouble—and still do, if the truth be known—convincing myself that someone could hurt me so terribly against my will. I wanted to preserve myself intact, and I could do that by pretending that the unwanted sex was my own fault.

No matter how many times I told "X" it wasn't a good idea, no matter how many times I asked him to leave, no matter how hard I pushed him away when it was all over, I firmly believed that I had let it happen. I must have "asked for it." And because I could call myself a guilty party, I didn't have to call him the same. More fundamentally, I didn't have to call the incident what it was: a forcible sex offense, a felony, a rape.

**I couldn't think of myself in terms of those awful words. I wanted to shield myself from an incident that left me feeling very shaken and very helpless.**

Oddly enough, it wasn't any existential moment of self-realization that compelled me to a new way of thinking; rather, it was the actions of my friends when I told them what had gone on. They all, without exception, blamed themselves. One said it was her fault because she had "seen it coming" months in advance and didn't tell me about her fears. Another claimed blame because he had watched "X" planning out a "strategy" the entire night and didn't try to stop him. A third felt guilty because he had gone home sick that evening, leaving the two of us alone. My best friend was hysterical because "X" had done a similar thing to her a year before, and she had never warned me.

Everyone, intent on gobbling up their portions of guilt, at first neglected to name "X" as a guilty party. The more I

realized that their blame-swallowing was incorrect, the more I recognized that I was doing the same thing.

American society does not like the idea of the "victim." We like to imagine ourselves as the descendants of our history textbook heroes: hardy, strong-willed, able to leap imperialist powers and untamed territories in a single bound. George Washington was not a victim; no, he took responsibility for even the lamest tree-chopping lie. We value the conqueror, the champion, the underdog who fights vicious environs to come out on top. Rarely, if ever, do we paint our tradition as merely human, as based on the lives of people just as susceptible to others and as mortal as we are.

For those of us schooled in an ancestral pioneer spirit, it becomes incredibly hard to admit that we have allowed someone else to get the upper hand, even for a brief moment. It paints us as something less than what we want to or "should" be. My friends and I were all so willing to take fault upon ourselves that we missed the one basic truth: Something terrible had happened, and only one person had wanted it to.

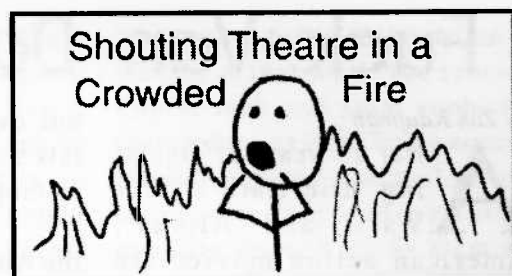
It almost goes without saying that questions of victim and victimizer are the hardest to deal with when it comes to sex. As we all know, either from experience or high school health lectures, sex can be the most mutual, giving act in the world. But it can also be the most exploitative and hurtful. Calling yourself a victim in the realm of sex is admitting defenselessness in a most major way.

Anyone who gets frustrated at the shockingly low numbers of reported sex crimes on campus would do well to remember this. I used to think that women who had been raped and kept silent were scared of the establishment, scared of one man or the proverbial Man. Now, I know that people who don't report violent acts are likely more scared of their own vulnerability.

Often, it's hardest to confess our  
*continued on next page*



# Go To Church Nekkid



by Gwynne Watkins

**H**ow can we dance while our world is turning?

How do we sleep while our beds are burning?

Buh-bum bum buh-bum. Buh-bum bum buh-bum

I figured out what's wrong with Christianity.

And I'm not talking about the Crusades, the Inquisition, or any of the historically appalling reasons people usually cite for their distrust of Christianity. There was a lot of fucked-up shit going on back in those days, which had nothing whatsoever to do with the original doctrines of Christianity. Kind of like televangelists and the Religious Right. But I digress.

No, the problem with Christianity is that it has trouble confessing its sources. It is, after all, one of the newer religions out there. Not as new as, say, the Branch Davidians or Buffy the Vampire Slayer, but a mere pre-teen compared to Bud-

dhism, goddess-worship, Native American religions, and dozens of other heavyweights in the spirituality ring. Which means that, by the time the Jews began their forty-year field trip, most of the good plotlines had already been taken. The Tree of Knowledge? If Adam and Eve had been boning up on Indian traditions, they would have known what was coming to them. Likewise, if Eve had bothered to ask her neighbors in the Indus River Valley, she would have learned that snakes, those mystical reptilian tricksters, are not to be fucked with.

**But no, Christianity falls into the hands of dumb white men, and suddenly it's the first and last word on everything.** If the first Christian emperors had been journalists, they would have been fired. Baal worshippers could have sued the pants off the Christian empire, if any of them had been left standing. I mean, even Shakespeare stole characters, plots, practically entire plays. It's nothing to be ashamed of. Deal with it, and move on.

You can start with Easter. Easter, The Day of Resurrection, when Jesus (that crazy cat!) disappeared from the tomb and said "Ha! I'm not really dead! I really had you going there, didn't I?" Coincidentally, we celebrate Easter on the verge of spring, the season when grass begins to grow and animals are born and crops go to seed. By an-

other sheer theological coincidence, we have this "Easter bunny" character who runs around delivering eggs.

If I was an uneducated individual, unaware that Christianity hadn't thought of all this first, I'd say, "Gee, that reminds me of that thing we used to do, back at the Mediterranean – remember that? It was something about fertility... yeah... that's where the bunnies and the eggs came from... and we sacrificed a guy! Right! This guy would die this really sacred important death so that spring would always come! Gee, those were the days."

And I love Easter. Culturally, it pales next to Christmas, but theologically, Easter is the happiest of the Christian holidays. Even more so because it's preceded by Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, all days of intense contemplation and mourning. Holy Week is a dramatization of death, then rebirth. The "circle of life," as they'd say in African religions and Disney movies. It always manages to strike a chord. All that chocolate doesn't hurt, either.

So what's the world's most influentially blockheaded religion to do? I say, roll with the whole "Easter" thing. It works for ya. And while you're at it, get back to some of those other Pagan roots. Maybe not the cannibalism thing. But perhaps the goddess thing. Worship menstruation, yeah! And big happy party holidays. More of those.

Or perhaps just two little words: Orgy Religion. A small change, a world of difference.

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own human weakness. But doing so can also be the ultimate expression of human strength.

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*If you would like to talk to a female or male Counselor Advocate about sexual assault, sexual harrassment, relationship abuse or any other related issues, CAs can be reached 24 hours a day. Call x5424 to have a CA paged. Or call x5756 if you want to leave a message. Counselor Advocates are not just available for crisis intervention, CAs also provide information and advocacy for all students.*



# Fuck Van Damme (in the Ear)

by Zak Kaufman

After 15 years of emulating 'Die Hard', 'Star Wars', and 'Aliens', American action movies are changing. They're changing so much that this summer, we may finally see a good comic-book based movie.

Ever since Hong Kong went back to being owned by China, their best filmmakers have been making the trip to America. As such, we've gained stars like Jackie Chan, Jet Li, Chow Yun Fat, Sammo Hung, and Michelle Yeoh, along with behind the scenes guys like Corey Yuen and John Woo. These actors can do moves that American actors simply can't pull off. Many of us have been following their foreign careers for years, and are very excited about what they're doing in America, where they have the potential to make their best movies ever.

They didn't have this potential before because although the Hong Kong action film industry has some of the most talented people on earth working in it, it doesn't have the same scale as the American film industry. Films are generally cheaper, and so costs get cut in production values like lighting, sets, film stock, supporting actors, and writing; basically anything that's not essential for the action sequences. The result is that the movies are amazing while the bullets and limbs are flying, but become useless the rest of the time. John Woo's legendary 'The Killer' makes my mouth hang open while thugs are being shot by the room-full,

but every scene where people talk makes me either fall asleep or laugh.

Introduce these guys to the American film industry with its absurdly high budgets, and some very cool stuff like 'Face/Off' gets produced. John Woo gets to work with good writers and with high production values, and he makes a movie that's great even when people aren't getting perforated. 'Die Hard' is still fun as hell even during non-action scenes, and that's one of the positive American aspects being melded with Hong Kong stuff.

The most recent example of this new Hong Kong/American hybrid category of action movie is 'Romeo Must Die', which blends not only Hong Kong style action sequences but also Hong Kong visual flair with American techniques and creators. **The visual style I'm talking about is hard to describe, but it's somewhat an attempt to give everyone the smoothness of John Shaft,** to make everyone and everything look super cool and stylish. Everyone's impeccably dressed with his or her hair slicked back, and they all look like they're in a Puff Daddy video. In the wrong hands it comes off silly, but in the right ones (like 'Romeo' director Andrzej Bartkowiak) it's very pretty. Aside from the nice suits, 'Romeo' also brings to the table Jet Li, the coolest man

since Jackie Chan, who when combined with a good choreographer (like Corey Yuen) can do stuff that makes Van Damme look like an aging crack addicted loser. The end result is a very cool movie that stands out from the crowd.

This melding of Hong Kong and American styles is still in its infancy, but its already making some major improvements in the American film industry. One of the problems with American action movies is that they haven't changed much since 'Die Hard' (1988). The scale has gotten bigger, but the actual action heroes do the same basic stuff. Everything happening around the hero (explosions, sets, special effects, action sequences) has gotten bigger, but the hero is still mainly just throwing himself off buildings, doing car chases, and shooting stuff, just like he always has. Even though the building is now exploding, the cars have been replaced with jets and power boats, and the hand guns have been exchanged for automatic laser sighted rocket launcher chain guns, the actual actor isn't doing much that Bruce Willis didn't already cover a decade ago.

That's finally starting to change with these new Hong Kong/American hybrid films. My favorite example is 1999's 'The Matrix', which heavily borrowed from Hong Kong action movies and Japanese animation. Although the guns and explosions were plentiful, the action heroes themselves actually did stuff on a larger, cooler scale in 'the Matrix', creating some fight scenes that can't re-

ally be compared to any other American movies. The actors were put through six months of physical training (making them more on par with guys like Jet Li), so that stunt double use was minimized. Combined with crazy special effects that concentrated on making the actors and not the guns and explosions look cooler, this lack of stunt doubles (which is a Hong Kong hallmark) allowed sophisticated fight choreography that simply wasn't possible when directors had to cut to a long shot every time they wanted Arnold Schwarzenegger to do a spin kick. 'The Matrix' also had American production values like actors, writing, and sets that made it still great during non-action scenes (despite what some people say), and demonstrated great use of Hong Kong visual style, making everyone look super cool and bad ass with tight leathers and slick shades. This all may seem unimportant, but the fact that they made Keanu Reeves look comparable to Chow Yun Fat & Jackie Chan is proof to me that 'the Matrix' represents an advance in action movies, and I think it's a preview of what's going to be happening in action movies over the next five years.


One of the possible upcoming results of all of this is something I've been looking forward to for many years: a good comic-book movie, something that I don't think has ever happened. This is because not only are most comic book movies crap ('Steel'), but because even great movies based on comic books (like 'Batman', which I love dearly), still feel more like parodies than the real thing. The directors have never

had the stunt or special effect sophistication to make something that really looks like a comic book, so instead opt to make over the top, tongue in cheek farces. The only movie that's ever come close to feeling like a comic book to me is once again 'the Matrix', which used Hong Kong/American melding to show a comic book style story that didn't feel like the makers were poking fun at the subject matter. They treat it like it was an actual movie, which most comic book movies don't. Everyone has super powers and costumes, it's about superheroes fighting world-conquering robots, and it has a ship that flies underneath the earth while avoiding flying metal squids. Even though it wasn't based on a comic book, it's a great comic book movie.

If the people who make future comic book movies take a lesson from 'the Matrix', the Spiderman movie might not suck. The next test for comic book movies is this summer's 'the X-Men', which, judging from the preview, could be good, but will still fail to fully bring a comic book to the screen. Action movies are getting to the point where they might be able to pull off a cool Wolverine, Cyclops, and Sabretooth (although I doubt they'll make Storm work), and the makers seem like they're taking the subject matter seriously enough (but not too seriously I hope). Director Bryan Singer ('The Usual Suspects', 'Apt Pupil') knows how to make over the top bad ass characters work on screen without being silly, and judging from the heavy hitters he has acting (Sir Ian McKellan, Patrick Stewart...), a lot of the characters should be done very well.

The only definite problem I foresee is that while the special effects tech and stunt sophistication does exist to bring across the super power oriented action sequences, they don't exist in quantity enough to do them as much as they would be done in a comic book without making a \$300 million price tag. The result is going to be like 'the Matrix', where every time anybody uses their power the whole movie stops to let the audience watch since the effect will be so expensive that it can only be done a few times. In a comic book there is no special effects cost, so in a fight scene the heroes are using their powers in almost every shot, creating a casualness to the power use that movies aren't ready for. So it's going to be a huge deal whenever Cyclops uses an optic blast or Magneto throws a car, which really isn't how comic books work.

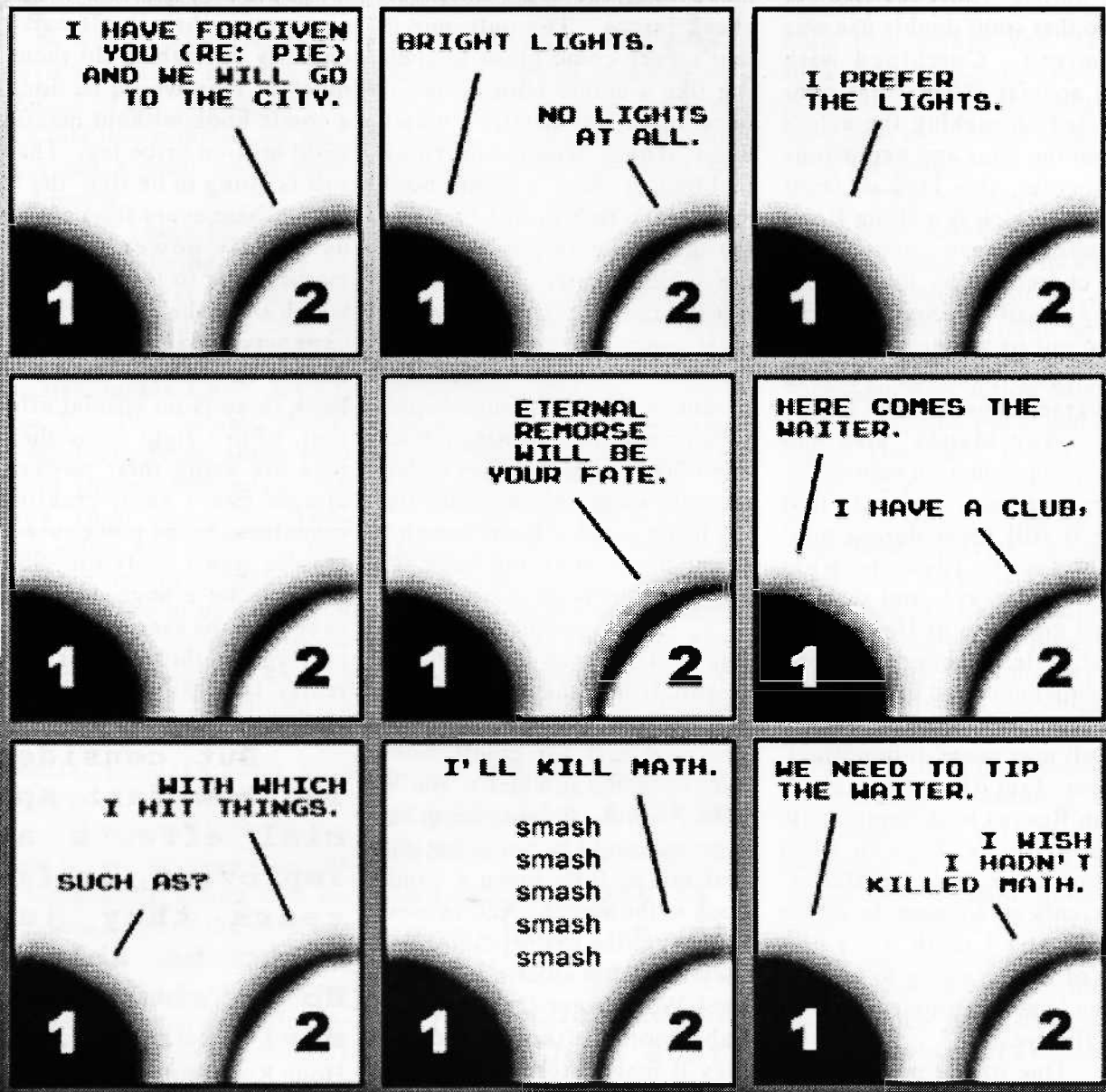
**But considering how fast special effects are improving, in five years they just might be able to do a comic book movie for real.** The Hong Kong stunts and style mixing with American writing, budget, and special effects is going to provide the tools to actually pull off a top notch live action Superman, and on that day I will be ready to die with a sloppy grin on my face. Until that day I'm looking forward to 'Mission: Impossible 2' this summer, where it looks like John Woo's going to make the most bad ass spy movie in history.

Viva la Hong Kong! 



# DEATH TO THE EXTREMIST II

✦ by M. Zole ✦



Oh, Mumford! by B.T. Johnson

by Neil Golden

